THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) No, Sir. There are two narrow gauge lines in Orissa.

1. Rupsa-Bangriposi is already sanctioned for conversion.
2. Naupada-Gunupur has been included in the budget 1997-98.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Yes Sir, subject to availability of resources.

(d) Necessary funds would be provided in the coming years.

Waiting List for Telephone Connections

918. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH :
SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN :

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of applications pending for grant of telephone connections as on date, State-wise and category-wise;

(b) the steps taken/proposed to be taken to clear them expeditiously;

(c) whether the telephone operations are also proposed to be privatised; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) Details of applications pending for grant of telephone connections State-wise and category-wise as on 31.1.1997 are as per the enclosed *Statement.*

(b) It is proposed to provide 24.5 lakh telephone connections during 1996-97 and 29 lakh telephone connections during 1997-98.

(c) and (d) The Government do not propose to privatise telephone operations. However, private sector has been permitted to provide Basic telephone services in the country in competition with DoT/MTNL.

Statement

Number of applications pending for grant of telephone connections, State-wise and Categery-wise as on 31.1.97.

S.No.	Name of State	QYT	N-OYT
1	2	3	4
1.	Andhra Pradesh	367	2,22,244
2.	Assam	180	28,856
3.	Bihar	79	61,041
4.	Gujarat (including Dadar, Diu, Daman & Nagar Haveli)	2,784	2,89,821
5.	Haryana	326	1,02,059
6.	Himachal Pradesh	8	46,710
7.	J&K	828	29,616
8.	Karnataka	1,299	2,10,690
9.	Kerala (including Lakshadweep (U.T.)	32,178	6,01,996
10.	Madhya Pradesh	29	64,367
11.	Maharashtra (including Goa and Mumbai)	2,104	3,43,483
12.	North-East (including Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura)	38	16,074
13.	Orissa	42	25,184
14.	Punjab (including Chandigarh)	1,199	2,27,351
15.	Rajasthan	945	1,92,265
16.	Tamilnadu (including Madras and Pondicherry (U.T.)	9,238	4,28,647
17.	Uttar Pradesh	442	1,71,212
18.	West Bengal (including Sikkim, Andeman & Niocbar, Islands & Calcutta)	295	1,59,370
19.	Delhi	69	38,872
	All India	52,450	32,59,858

Merger of AI and IA

919. SHRI V. PRADEEP DEV : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Board of Directors of Air India have made a representation to him on August 13, 1996 for merger of Air India and Indian Airlines;

(b) whether it is also a fact that the Board passed a unanimous resolution recommending this merger;

(c) if so, the policy of Government in this regard;

(d) whether Government have accepted the recommendation of the Board; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Board of Air India in its meeting held in September, 1996 unanimously resolved in favour of merger of Air India and Indian Airlines.